

Changing Pattern of Occupational Structure in Morigaon District of Assam

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Abstract

There is a distinct socio-spatial disparity in the distribution of workers in the Morigaon district. On the other hand, occupational pattern of the district is not static. There are conspicuous temporal changes from one sector to other attractive sector so that that people can improve their living conditions. It is seen that the percentage of the people engaged in the primary sector has been decreasing. As a result, the percentage of workers in secondary and tertiary sectors has been increasing among the different categories of workers. Thus, a significant proportion of cultivators have been moving to other non-agricultural sectors. It brings a rapid socio-economic change among the people of different communities of the district.

Therefore it is necessary to study the spatio-temporal variation of occupational structure of Morigaon district, in order to formulate strategies for occupational opportunity on the basis of community and space relation. It is expected that the study will have not only academic value, it will also help the planners to adopt separate plans and programs for different social groups inhabiting in different mouzas of the district.

KEYWORDS: Socio-spatial disparity, Occupational pattern, Temporal changes, Socio-economic change.

INTRODUCTION

Occupational pattern of a region means the productive participation of the people in various works. It gives a clear picture of economic condition of the people inhabiting in different regions.

The various occupations of the district can be classified in to three main categories, viz., Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. The primary sector of occupation is constituted by agriculture and allied activities like livestock, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining and quarrying etc. the secondary sector of occupation includes manufacturing industries composed of both large and small scale, processing and repairing in household industries and in other than household industries and constructions. The tertiary sector of occupation includes all the other activities like trade and commerce, transport and communication and other services.

STUDY AREA

The present Morigaon district, centrally located in the state Assam, was upgraded from sub-division to a new district carving out of the old Nagaon district in 1989. It is bounded by the mighty Brahmaputra, and the Darrang district in the north, the Nagaon district in the east, the Karbi-Anglong district and Meghalaya in the south and the Kamrup district in the west and south-west. It comprises sixteen (16) mouzas inhabited by the people of four major social groups. The land mass extends between 26° 2' 24" and 26° 28' 12" N latitudes and between 91° 58' 57" E and 92° 34' 48" E longitudes. The total geographical area of the district is 1559 sq km constituting 1.99 percent of the state's total geographical area. According to 2001 census, out of the total population of 7, 76,256 percent of which 5142 percent are males and 48.58 percent are females.

METHODOLOGY

As the present study deals with the socio-economic aspect, relevant data and information for the study area taken from both secondary and primary sources. The secondary data are collected from the census reports and other published and unpublished sources available with the district authorities.

The relevant primary data are collected from households of some villages selected from different mouzas of the district. The villages and households are selected in such a way that they represent the different social groups of the district by taking purposive stratified random sampling. For recording the data and information from each of the household, a schedule is used.

The collected data- primary and secondary are processed, tabulated, analysed and interpreted with the help of maps and diagrams.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- 1) To examine the spatial disparity in occupational structure.
- 2) To analyse the community wise variation in occupational structure.

SPATIAL DISPARITY IN OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

There is a distinct spatial disparity in occupational structure within the study region. The table 1 shows the mouza wise distribution of workers in the three main categories, *Viz.*, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. The percentage of workers in the primary sector is highest in five mouzas, *Viz.*, Pokaria (95.43 percent), Niz-Ghagua (93.06 percent), Bokani (92.38 percent), Laharighat (91.64 percent) and Mayang (88.24 percent). The Gova mouza shows the lowest percentage (51.52 percent) of workers in this sector. The spatial variation of the workers is also seen in the secondary sector. The mouzas of Gova, Uttarkhola, Morigaon, Tetelia and Manaha account for 25.09, 6.77, 5.66, 4.59 and 3.25 percents of workers in this sector of occupation respectively. The Gova mouza occupies the highest position and the Pokaria mouza the lowest position in this category of workers under secondary occupation. As the Gova mouza is influenced by the Jagiroad urban centre along with the Hindustan Paper Mill, it occupies the highest position while due to the absence of any small scale and large scale industries, most of the workers of the Pokaria mouza are engaged in primary sector. There are also mouza wise variations in the tertiary sector of occupation. Among the mouzas, the Morigaon mouza stands first with a proportion of 26.55 percent of the tertiary workers. This is only because of the presence of the district head quarters at Morigaon town which is considered as the administrative town of the district. The other top four mouzas are Gova (23.39 percent), Charaibahi (18.68 percent), Dandua (16.06 percent) and Tetelia (13.86 percent). It is seen that in the Morigaon, Dandua and Charaibahi mouzas, the proportions of service holders are higher than those of the other mouzas. On the other hand, a good position of trade and commerce and the improved condition of transport and communication system accord the Gova mouza second position in this respect (Fig.1).

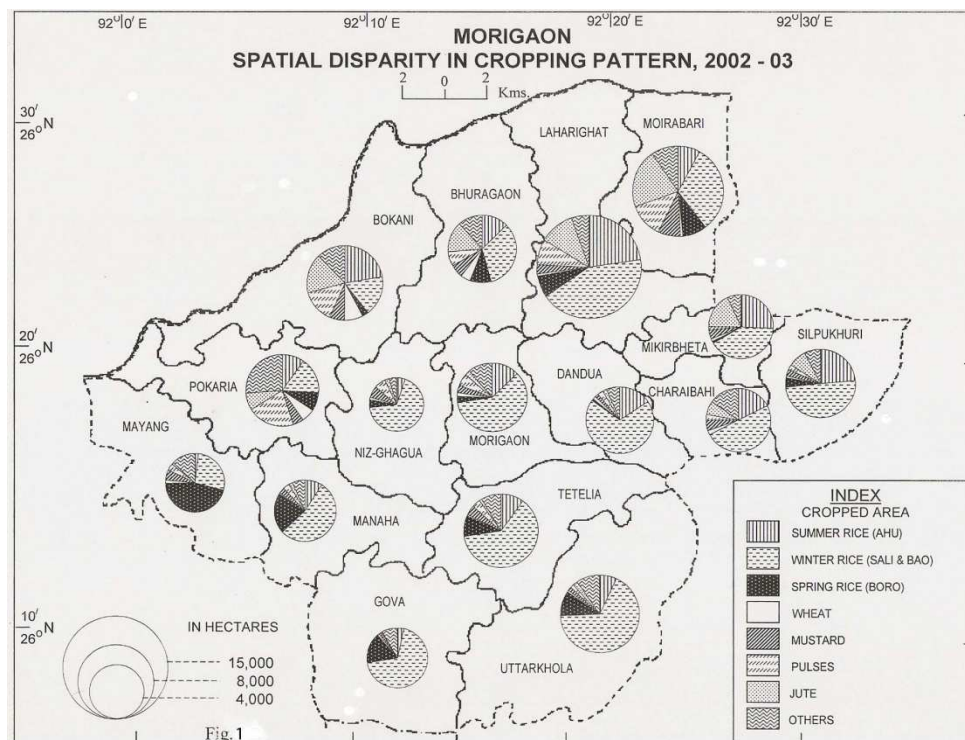


Table-1.
MOUZAWISH OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE, MORIGAON DISTRICT, 1991

Mouza	Total Workers	Percentage of population in different occupations		
		Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1. Dandua	7179	81.35	2.59	16.06
2. Morigaon	13493	67.79	5.66	26.55
3. Tetelia	6796	81.55	4.59	13.86
4. Uttarkhola	15063	81.41	6.77	11.82
5. Charaibahi	9587	78.47	2.85	18.68
6. Mikirbheta	7476	85.10	1.72	13.18
7. Silpukhuri	10834	85.42	2.51	12.07
8. Laharighat	18898	91.64	1.31	7.05
9. Moirabari	20181	84.17	2.28	13.55
10. Bhuragaon	17280	86.85	2.72	10.43
11. Bokani	9887	92.38	1.64	5.98
12. Gova	14736	51.52	25.09	23.39
13. Manaha	8511	85.19	3.25	11.56
14. Mayang	9072	88.24	2.40	9.36
15. Niz-Ghagua	5831	93.06	0.91	6.03
16. Pokaria	9397	95.43	0.67	3.90
District	184221	82.31	4.67	13.02

Source: Calculated from Rural Primary Census Abstract, 1991.

TEMPORAL VARIATION OF OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

The occupational pattern of the district is not static. The workers of each sector have a tendency to improve their living conditions by moving to alternative jobs. Therefore, they are always in search of a better job which might as they perceive bring a remarkable change in their economic condition. The present study is based on the census data of 1971 and 1991 and the data of the year 2005 is collected from the sample field survey by the researcher himself.

The table 2a shows that since 1971, the percentage of the people engaged in primary sector has been decreasing. In 1971, the workers in the primary sector constituted 89.30 percent, while the corresponding figure is reduced up to 82.30 percent and 73.67 percent in 1991 and 2005 respectively.

Table 2a
MORIGAON DISTRICT
TEMPORAL VARIATION OF WORKERS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS, 1971-2005

Sectors	Percentage of workers to total main workers						
	1971	1991			2005		
	Total Workers	Total Workers	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Male Workers	Female Workers
Primary	89.30	82.31	74.84	7.47	73.67	68.54	5.13
Secondary	1.68	4.67	4.13	0.54	8.26	5.70	2.56
Tertiary	9.02	13.02	11.72	1.30	18.07	14.06	4.01

Source: Calculated from Rural Census Abstract, 1971 and 1991. 2005 year data are collected from field survey.

Table 2b
TEMPORAL VARIATION OF WORKERS IN DIFFERENT CATEGORIES, 1971-2005

Categories of workers	Percentage of workers to total main workers						
	1971	1991			2005		
	Total Workers	Total Workers	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Male Workers	Female Workers
Cultivators	78.80	69.44	63.21	6.23	59.14	55.13	4.01
Agricultural labourers	9.67	11.49	10.51	0.98	13.42	12.51	0.91
Live-stock, forestry fishing and hunting	0.79	1.35	1.10	0.25	1.09	0.88	0.21
Mining and Quarrying	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	Insig.
Household and other Industries	1.52	3.86	3.33	0.53	6.59	4.54	2.05
Construction	0.16	0.81	0.80	0.01	1.67	1.16	0.51
Trade and commerce	3.17	4.64	4.56	0.08	6.70	5.75	0.95
Transport and communication	0.62	1.23	1.22	0.01	1.27	1.26	0.01
Other services	5.23	7.15	5.94	1.21	10.10	7.05	3.05

Source: Calculated from Rural Primary Census Abstract, 1971 and 1991. 2005 year data are collected from field survey.

The percentage of workers engaged as cultivators has decreased from 78.80 percent in 1971 to 69.44 percent in 1991 (table 2. b). It further decreased to 59.14 percent in 2005. This is perhaps due to the increase of the rate of literacy in the rural areas and increase of scope for absorption in jobs other than in primary sector. On the other hand, it is observed in the field work that some peasants either sell or lease out their meagre plots of agricultural lands due to their poor economic condition. Therefore, the percentage of agricultural labourers (both male and female) has increased from 9.67 percent in 1971 to 11.49 and 13.42 percent in 1991 and 2005 respectively. The percentage of population in livestock, forestry and fishing is found to increase from 0.79 percent (1971) to 1.35 percent (1991) while the field study shows that it slightly decreased to 1.09 percent in 2005. In the case of mining and quarrying, the percentage of workers has been decreasing since 1971. From the field study it is found that only the illiterate people are still engaged in this sector. The proportion has been decreasing from 0.04 percent (1971) to 0.025 and 0.02 percent in 1991 and 2005 respectively (table 2.b)

On the other hand, the number of workers in the activities of the secondary sector has been increasing. In 1971 the percentage of people engaged in the secondary sector constituted 1.68, while it increased to 4.67 in 1991. Though the region is industrially too much backward, yet since the end of the year 2000, a large number of 'Self-Help' groups have emerged in most of the mouzas of the district. The members of these groups are engaged in different activities like manufacturing, processing and other small scale village level cottage industries. Hence, at present, the region accounts for 8.26 percent (2005) of direct employment of the total workers in all the activities of secondary occupation (table 2.b).

The household industries and works other than household industries account for 1.52 percent in 1971, while it increased to 3.86 percent of the total workers of the region in 1991. However, the field study reveals that the percentage in this category in 2005 comprises 6.59 of which the male's and female's shares are 4.54 and 2.05 respectively. Likewise, the construction work constitutes 0.61 (1971) and 0.81 (1991) percent of the total workers in the region, while it rises to 1.67 percent during the field study year of 2005.

The percentage of population engaged in the tertiary sector is only 9.02 in 1971. But after upgradation of the former Morigaon sub-division as a separate district carving out of Nagaon district, the percentage of population engaged in the tertiary sector increased to 13.03 in 1991 as a result of increase of trade and commerce and emergence of different market centres in the district of which 11.73 percent are males and 1.29 percent are females. However, the field study made in 2005 shows that the share in this sector is 18.07 percent which is higher than the figure of 1991 (13.03 percent) During the year of field study, the males and the females constitute 14.06 percent and 4.01 percent respectively. The share of the workers in trade and commerce is 3.17 percent in 1971 while it slightly increased to 4.64 in 1991 and 6.70 percent in 2005. In transport and communication also the rate of increase is not so significant. The share in this category increased from 0.62 in 1971 to 1.24 in 1991 and 1.27 percent in 2005. The service sector constitutes 5.23 percent in 1971 while it

increased to 7.15 percent in 1991, of which 5.94 percent are male workers and 1.21 percent is female workers. In the field study, made in 2005 it is observed that the workers in the same sector rises to 10.10 percent of which 7.05 percent are male and 3.05 percent are the female workers.

COMMUNITY WISE VARIATION IN OCCUPATION

There is also community wise variation in occupations of the district. From the table 3, it is found that the variation of percentage of primary workers is highest (18.36) among the people of indigenous general community, followed by scheduled caste community (10.23) and immigrant Muslim community (8.48) during 1991-2005. The corresponding figure is lowest (5.18) in the case of scheduled tribe community. Thus it indicates that people of all communities have been moving away from the primary to other sectors in different proportion.

Table: 3
COMMUNITY WISE VARIATION IN OCCUPATIONS INDICATING
OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

Community	Primary			Secondary			Tertiary			Index of volume of change (1991-2005)
	1991	2005	Variation (1991-2005)	1991	2005	Variation (1991-2005)	1991	2005	Variation (1991-2005)	
Indigenous General	78.47	60.10	- 18.37	2.85	10.85	+ 8.00	18.68	29.05	+ 10.37	18.37
Immigrant Muslim	84.17	75.69	- 8.48	2.28	4.70	+ 2.42	13.55	19.61	+ 6.06	8.48
Scheduled Tribe	80.80	75.62	- 5.18	3.71	5.43	+ 1.72	15.48	18.94	+ 3.46	5.18
Scheduled Caste	92.02	81.79	- 10.23	1.57	5.10	+ 3.53	6.41	13.11	+ 6.70	10.23

Source: Calculated from Rural Primary census Abstract, 1991 and 2005 year date are collected from field survey.

The shares of all the communities engaged in the secondary sector increased during 1991-2005. The percentage of workers of the indigenous general community in this sector increased from 2.85 to 10.85 during 1991 – 2005, followed by scheduled caste community, in which case it increased from 1.57 percent to 5.10 percent. On the other hand, the share of the scheduled tribe community was 3.71 percent in 1991 but it increased to 5.43 percent in 2005. In the case of immigrant Muslim community, the percent of workers increased from 2.28 to 4.70. Thus, it is seen that there has been mobility of people from the primary to the secondary sector among all the communities in different proportions.

It is highly satisfactory to note that the tertiary workers of all the communities increased during 1991 to 2005. From the table 3 it is evident that the workers engaged in the tertiary sector of the indigenous community is as high as 29.05 percent, whereas it is lowest (13.11 percent) in the case of scheduled caste community.

Thus it is seen that the mobility of occupation is highest among the indigenous general community and lowest among the scheduled caste community while the mobility is seen moderate among the other two communities.

CONCLUSION

The changing pattern of occupational structure is the result of the workers' finding out non agricultural jobs elsewhere. But the rate of occupational change differ from mouza to mouza or community to community depending upon the level of educational development, availability of alternative jobs elsewhere, development of transport and communication and marketing facilities. It is, therefore, the occupational change is found to be highest in the mouzas where indigenous general people are living and least in the regions inhabited by the scheduled tribe. There has been some change of occupational pattern of the rural people in the immigrant dominated as well as in scheduled caste dominated regions. But their change is almost horizontal whereas the change of indigenous general people is mostly vertical. Therefore, it is noted that industrial technology of handloom and weaving industry should be modernized for higher outputs which may provide for multidimensional occupational avenues to the rural people.

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